

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6358

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, BG, US,

SUBJ: SCHWEITZER HOSPITAL

YAOUNDE FOR RDO

REF: STATE 46478

1. SUMMARY: MAX CAULET,ADMINSTRATOR OF SCHWEITZER FOUNDATION, HAS GIVEN GREEN LIGHT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF HOSPITAL TO LOCAL FIRM IN LAMBARNE AND WILL UNDERTAKE FUND RAISING TRIP LEAVING HERE IN MI-MAY. END SUMMARY.

2. CAULET CALLED AT EMBASSY TO INFORM USG OF RECENT ACTIONS AND PLANS OF SCHWEITZER FOUNDATION. CAULET SAID HE HAD SIGNED CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF FOUNDATION WITH LOCAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY BOURDIN ET CHAUSSE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF HOSPITAL AND WORK SCHEDULED TO BEGIN SHORTLY. CAULET EXPLAINED THAT WITH COMPLETION OF TWO BIG BRIDGES AT LAMBARENE AND OTHER LESSER CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES ALL CONSTRUCTION FIRMS WOULD SHORTLY BE LEAVING LAMBARNE FOR ACTIVITIES ELSEWHERE IN GABON AND, UNLESS CONTRACT SIGNED NOW, IT WOULD BE AT LEAST A YEAR BEFOR WORK COULD BEGIN AND COST OF HOSPITAL WOULD RISE SHARPLY. CAULET POINTED OUT THAT IF HOSPITAL HAD BEEN STARTED EVEN A YEAR AGO CONSIDERABLE MONEY COULD HAVE SAVED AND THAT FOUNDATION FELT THAT NO FURTHER

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TIME SHOULD BE LOST. CAULET SAID FOUNDATION HAS OBTAINED

CREDITS FROM LOCAL LIBREVILLE BANK AND THAT HE WILL DEPART MAY 16, ON FUND RAISING TRIP IN HOPES OF ASSURING FINANCING FOR PROJECT. CAULET SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED SITUATION IN DETAIL WITH BOTH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AND BANK AND BOTH WERE AWARE THAT TOTAL FUNDING OF PROJECT NOT YET IN HAND. BECAUSE GABONESE GOVERNMENT FIRMLY BEHIND PROJECT AND HAS ALREADY CONTRIBUTED , AS WELL AS FACT THAT IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING SCHWEITZER WORK RECOGNIZED HERE, CAULET SAID BOTH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AND BANK HAD BEEN WILLING TO ACCEPT THE RISK INVOLVED.

3. CAULET'S ITINERARY IS AS FOLLOWS: LAMBARNE-LIBREVILLE-MARSEILLES-PARIS-NEWYORK-MONTREAL-PARIS-COPENHAGEN-OSLO-STOCKHOLM-HELSINKI-TEHRAN- KUWAIT-ROME-MARSEILLES-LIBREVILLE-LAMBARENE. CAULET WILL BEGIN HIS TRIP WITH TALKS WITH FRENCH OFFICIALS WHERE HE HOPES TO FIRM UP FRENCH COMMITMENT AND WILL THEN PROCEED TO U.S. DURING FIRST HALF OF JUNE. HE WILL, OF COURSE , COME TO WASHINGTON AND HOPES VERY MUCH TO BE ABLE TO FIRM UP AID COMMITMENT AT THAT TIME. CAULET WILL ALSO MAKE NUMBER OF TRIPS NOT COVERED BY ABOVE ITINERARY INCLUDING GERMANY SWITZERLAND.

4. COMMENT. FOR CAULET AND DR.HABISCH (MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF HOSPITAL) THIS IS ALL OR NOTHING GAMBLE. EITHER FIRM COMMITMENTS ARE OBTAINED TO PERMIT HOSPITAL PLANS TO PROCEED OR THEY WILL BOTH RESIGN AND LEAVE GABON. AS THEY BOTH BY FAR THE MOST DYNAMIC AND EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR LAMBARENE HAS SEEN SINCE DEATH OF SCHWEITZER, THEIR FAILURE AND DEPARTURE WOULD BE SERIOUS BLOW TO HOSPITAL FROM WHICH IT MIGHT WELL NEVER RECOVER.
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